

**Soldiers** *Online*



*"Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time." — President George W. Bush, Sept. 11, 2001*



REUTERS/Brad Rickerby

# America Under Attack

Story by Heike Hasenauer

**(Left)** Smoke pours from the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center shortly after the structures were struck by hijacked airliners on Sept. 11. **(Below)** Some 40 minutes after the second attack in New York the crash of a hijacked airliner into the Pentagon set off a massive firefighting and rescue operation involving both military and civilian personnel.

Beth Reece





Local firefighters and rescue squads join survivors of the attack in trying to control the flames and locate missing personnel.

# AMERICA UNDER ATTACK

**S**O horrific and unexpected were the almost simultaneous attacks by hijackers of three U.S. airliners that deliberately and precisely crashed into the twin towers of Manhattan's World Trade Center — then the largest commercial complex

in the world — and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., Sept. 11, that government officials likened the day to “the second Pearl Harbor.”

A fourth hijacked airliner, later believed to have been en route to Washington for an attack on the White House, crashed into a field about 80 miles from Pittsburgh, Pa.

Early casualty estimates far exceeded the number of military and civilian casualties on that

day of infamy in 1941.

In New York, at press time, thousands of the roughly 100,000 daily visitors to the World Trade Center and 50,000 employees who worked in the two, 110-story towers that collapsed were feared dead. Two hundred firefighters and other rescuers were missing.

American and United Airlines, each of which lost two airliners in the hijacking-suicide-bombing disaster, reported 266 dead passengers and crewmembers total.

And in the nation's capital an early estimate of the number of dead reached 800. A day later, Defense







SGT Carmen L. Burgess (both)

*"In every generation, the world has produced enemies of human freedom. They have attacked America, because we are freedom's home and defender. And the commitment of our fathers is now the calling of our time."*  
— President George W. Bush

Department officials reported the death toll was expected to be much lower. And on Sept. 13, they reported 126 people who were on the ground at the time of the attack were dead or missing.

The Army reported 21 soldiers, 47 civilian employees and six contract personnel dead or missing.

At the Air Force's Charles C. Carson Center for Mortuary Affairs at Dover Air Force Base, Del., mortuary-affairs personnel began receiving remains, which would be flown to destinations across the country for burial, according to families' wishes [see accompanying story on page 15].



**Within minutes after the collapse of the Pentagon's outer wall, emergency personnel return to the search for survivors and victims.**

Meantime, the Caisson Platoon of the 3rd U.S. Infantry, The Old Guard, at Fort Myer, Va., prepared for a large number of potential burials at Arlington National Cemetery.

America had, literally, come under attack, the worst attack on U.S. soil since Dec. 7, 1941, officials said.

## The Assault

The nightmare began shortly before 9 a.m. Eastern Time when an airliner crashed, kamikaze-like, into one of the World Trade Center's towers and exploded into a giant orange-black fireball.



**Emergency personnel load casualties aboard a medevac helicopter on Interstate 95 near the Pentagon.**



Eighteen minutes later a second airliner sliced into the second tower and exploded. Together the fire and smoke engulfed the buildings like a mid-air tidal wave. Ash and debris covered the ground for miles, and smoke filled the sky. Before the towers

collapsed, people were seen jumping to their deaths from the windows above the fire.

Following the collapse, rescue workers likened the scene to a "nuclear winter," the aftermath of a nuclear explosion.

About an hour after the first crash,



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**A Navy physician examines a shaken Pentagon employee as Army medical personnel look on. Additional aid came from local hospitals and emergency medical teams.**

at 9:45 a.m. Eastern Time, hundreds of miles away, an American Airlines 757 passed over Arlington National Cemetery before slamming into the Pentagon's west side, an area recently occupied by the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, along with an element of the office of the

Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans.

And the "bombardment" seemed to have no end.

As America reeled from the horror of one attack, another followed. Some twenty minutes after the Pentagon crash the fourth hijacked jet crashed in the field near Pittsburgh.

Shock, disbelief, anger, fear and sadness overwhelmed the nation. And, as people around the world heard the news, they shared America's sentiments. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said: "We've received calls from across the world offering their sympathy and their assistance."

Members of the European Union called the attacks "an act of war by madmen."

Many people stood riveted to television sets or by radios. They cried, embraced one another seeking comfort or remained frozen, simply trying to comprehend the unbelievable.

President George W. Bush placed U.S. military forces on the highest alert status, and for the first time in U.S. history the Federal Aviation Administration grounded all domestic commercial airline flights, closing some 5,000 airports and stranding about 200,000 passengers. Canada also grounded all its flights and, in Great Britain, flights over London were suspended.

The District of Columbia Air National Guard, stationed at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington, scrambled its F-16 fighters to patrol the skies over the capital, said D.C. National Guard spokeswoman LTC Phyllis Phipps-Barnes.

The United States closed its borders with Canada and Mexico. Congressional leaders were spirited to safety at an undisclosed location outside Washington. And Bush, who had been in Florida, was flown to Air Force bases in Louisiana and Nebraska, for security reasons. That evening, Air Force One, escorted by three fighter jets, returned to Washington, where Bush addressed the nation from the Oval Office.

"Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America," he said. "These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time."

Following the speech, members of the House and Senate who had remained in Washington gathered on the steps of the U.S. Capitol and demonstrated their support by singing



*"A tragedy like this could have torn our country apart. But instead it has united us, and we have become a family. So those perpetrators, who took this on to tear us apart . . . It has backlashed. It has backfired. . . We are more united than ever before." — Rev. Billy Graham*



**(Above) A Defense Department civilian worker carries an infant to safety following the attack. The child did not require immediate medical attention.**

**(Above, right) Survivors of the attack console each other as they wait to be examined by medical personnel.**

an impromptu rendition of "God Bless America."

Earlier in the day in New York City, United Nations headquarters was evacuated, major financial markets closed, and all bridges and tunnels were blocked. In Washington, national museums closed and the White House and the Departments of Justice and State were evacuated.

Government offices across

the country shut down. Military installations limited access. Schools dismissed classes early. And portions of highways, subway and train routes were closed.

No one in America seemed immune from the day's tragedies. Even Disney World in Florida and Disneyland in California closed. Major league baseball came to a halt, the NFL cancelled its lineup, and the upcoming Emmy Awards were postponed.







**(Above)** Military personnel from throughout the Pentagon work together to assist a casualty. **(Right)** Coworkers share a quiet moment in the minutes after the attack.

Overseas, nonessential employees at the Supreme Allied Command, Europe, headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, were evacuated.

Across America and abroad frantic people tried to call loved ones or sent e-mail messages to assure them they were OK. Consequently, communications systems jammed.

## The Nation Reacts

In the hours after the attacks, the Red Cross issued pleas for blood donations, and on Sept. 13 sent six rail cars loaded with medical supplies and



SGT Carmen L. Burgess (all four)



**Flames pour from windows in the Pentagon, just a few hundred meters from the point where American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the building.**

other material to New York.

The Coast Guard beefed up its coastal patrols and the Defense Department reported aircraft carriers and guided missile destroyers had moved into the waters near New York and Washington, D.C. Those included the carrier *USS George Washington* and the *USS John F. Kennedy*, each with 2,500 to 3,000 sailors aboard.

Amphibious ships carrying marines and sailors to provide security, surgical

teams and hospital beds, and guided missile cruisers and guided missile destroyers were also deployed. On Sept. 13, the Navy reported that the 500-bed hospital ship *USNS Comfort*, based in Baltimore, Md., had sailed for New York.

Among the first rescue workers at the Pentagon were medics from Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., who provided blankets and treated firefighters for smoke inhalation.

Governors in 23 states declared a state of emergency and activated their National Guard forces.

As of 6 a.m., Sept. 12, some 8,000 National Guard troops had been activated, primarily from New York, New Jersey, the District of Columbia and Virginia, said National Guard spokesman Mark Allen.

Secretary of the Army Thomas E. White called up the D.C. Guard, not under the jurisdiction of a governor or the city's mayor. Many Guard soldiers manned emergency operations centers, pulled security and provided medical assistance, Allen said.

The New Jersey Guard had immediately set up an emergency operations center at Fort Dix, N.J. And on Sept. 12, 800 of its soldiers were on active duty.

Besides manning the operations center at Fort Dix, they ran other emergency operations centers at Jersey City, Atlantic City and in Somerset County's Franklin Township, said Ray Martyniuk, a New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs spokesman.

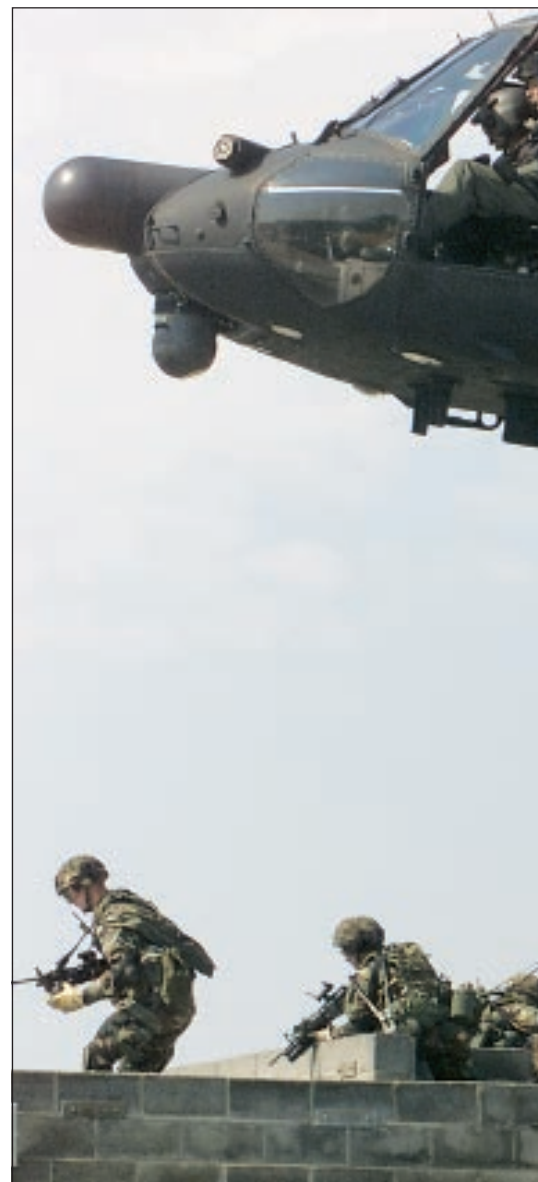
Guard soldiers from Jersey City's 50th Main Support Battalion's medical unit treated victims of the World Trade Center attack who were ferried across the Hudson River to a treatment center set up at Liberty State Park, about 100 yards from the Statue of Liberty, he said.

At the Jersey City National Guard Armory, soldiers set up a temporary hospital to handle the potential overflow of injured from the triage center at the state park, said 1LT John Powers of

Jersey City's 444th Public Affairs Detachment.

Some 200 soldiers, primarily medics, eight ambulances, and a platoon of infantry were positioned at the site, Powers said. "Right now we're waiting to here from the state's adjutant general what our mission will be, based on the situation in the city."

Powers said the medics, who were located about 1.5 miles west of the World Trade Center site on the New Jersey side of the Hudson River, could be called to go in to pick up the injured or dead. There was a possibility the





armory would be used as a temporary morgue.

Additionally, NJARNG soldiers provided aviation support to state police. The Air National Guard's 177th Fighter Wing was attached to the 1st Air Force as part of the nation's air defense, Martyniuk said.

Meantime, armories at Westfield

**Among the American military forces placed on alert in the days following the terrorist attacks were several Navy carrier battle groups (*right*) and elements of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (*below*).**







**Navy and Air Force fighters — including F-16s of the District of Columbia Air National Guard — patrolled the skies over the nation's capital in the days following the attack on the Pentagon.**

and Teaneck became collection points for donated medical supplies and other equipment.

At the Pentagon, where a portion of the building collapsed in the attack there, 20,000 people had been evacuated. Aircraft from the D.C. Guard's aviation unit at Davison Army Airfield at Fort Belvoir, Va., were also brought into action.

Four UH-1 helicopters provided medical evacuation support for Pentagon victims, one UH-60 Black Hawk transported officials and an OH-58 helicopter supported Metropolitan D.C. police, said Phipps-Barnes.

At 5 p.m. Sept. 11, the first wave of military police from the D.C. Guard's 372nd MP Bn. joined the effort to manage the chaotic traffic situation in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia area as thousands of government commuters headed out of the city.

An emergency operations unit, the Military District of Washington Engineer Company, arrived at the Pentagon crash site to clear rubble and begin removing bodies, as did soldiers from the 767th Ordnance Co. from Fort McNair, in D.C.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff GEN Hugh Shelton said: "We have watched the tragedy of an outrageous act of barbaric terrorism carried out by fanatics ... acts that have killed and

maimed many innocent and decent citizens of our country.

"I will tell you up front," Shelton said. "I have no intentions of discussing today what comes next, but make no mistake about it, your armed forces are ready."

Retired GEN H. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of coalition forces during the Gulf War, said: "We've got special operations forces in all our military forces, and they're fully capable of dealing with terrorists."

"What these bastards have done is attacked innocent civilians," he said. "We went to extremes in the Middle East, even putting our forces at greater risk, to prevent killing civilians. That's the difference between them and us."



Bush assured people at home and abroad that we will go after those who perpetrated this despicable act of cowardice, as well as those who harbor the tyrants.

In America, Sept. 14 was a national day of prayer and remembrance. On this date, too, President Bush approved an order to call as many as 50,000 Reservists to active duty. At press time, the Army was expected to call up 10,000 personnel; Air Force, 13,000; Navy, 3,000; Marines, 7,500; and Coast Guard, 2,000.

They will be called upon to provide port operations, medical support, engineer support, general civil support and homeland defense, DOD officials said. □



SGT Carmen L. Burgess

**Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld (right) and a colleague return to their Pentagon offices Sept. 11 after surveying damage to the building.**

## Caring for the Dead

**E**VEN as rescue workers continued their determined search for possible survivors of the Sept. 11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon, the remains of those who perished in the assault were being removed and transported to a specialized military facility in Dover, Del.

The grim task of identifying and preparing for burial the dead from the Pentagon — 125 military and civilian employees and 64 passengers and crewmembers aboard American Airlines Flight 77 — fell to the personnel of the Air Force's Charles C. Carson Center for Mortuary Affairs at Dover Air Force Base.

The facility received the first dead on Sept. 13, with 115 sets of remains having reached Dover by the time this issue went to press. The bodies were flown by UH-1s and UH-60s from the Pentagon to Davison Army Airfield at Fort Belvoir, Va., and were then transferred to CH-47 Chinooks for the flight to Dover.

The Defense Department's largest port mortuary and the only one in the continental United States, at full operating capacity the Dover facility is staffed by about 400 personnel, Air Force officials said. Half of the workers are active-duty Air Force, and the others are drawn primarily from Air Force Reserve mortuary-affairs squadrons in California, Washington, New York and New Jersey. In the wake of the Pentagon disaster the mortuary's staff was also augmented by personnel from the Rockville, Md.-based Office of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner, as well as by specialized technicians from the FBI.

With augmentation the 34,000-square-foot Dover facility can handle up to 100 sets of remains per day, officials said, and can store up to 1,000 bodies.

The first task faced by the mortuary's workers in the wake of the Pentagon tragedy, Air Force officials said, was to begin identifying each set of full or partial remains. The difficulty of that identification process varied greatly, depending on such factors as the deceased person's location at the time of the crash, the nature of the injuries, and whether or not the deceased was a Pentagon employee.

The fact that military members and civilians working at the Pentagon wore identification badges in some cases aided in their identification, officials said, as did the fact that since 1992 the armed forces have collected some 3.5 million DNA specimens from service members and certain civilian employees. DNA samples drawn from presumed military and DOD victims will be matched against samples in the armed forces database, officials said, while samples from civilian victims will be compared with DNA from family members.

Other methods of identification included fingerprints, dental records and bone analysis. In addition, careful records were compiled of where each set of full or partial remains was recovered from within the Pentagon, a technique investigators hoped would aid in the identification process. Officials stressed, however, that given the nature of the disaster and the horrendous injuries suffered by some victims, identifying all of the remains could take months.

Once identified, the remains were prepared for release to next of kin. The first memorial services for victims of the attack were held on Sept. 15, with more to follow as additional identifications were made. — *Steve Harding*